



July 29, 2020

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for Amendment to Budget Article 5 (H-7171)

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

SWAP (Stop Wasting Abandoned Property) Inc. is writing today **in strong support of the proposed Amendment to Budget Article 5 (Question 3a)**. This section of the amendment proposes \$65 million to increase the availability of affordable homes and support community revitalization through redevelopment, new construction, property acquisition and investment in local infrastructure or assets.

SWAP is a private non-profit community development corporation committed to providing affordable housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income, revitalizing urban neighborhoods and building new communities. Since 1975, when neighborhood activists formed SWAP to combat and reverse blight on the Southside, the organization has built and rehabilitated over 1,500 blighted properties. SWAP is also a proud member of Homes RI, a coalition of organizations working together to increase and preserve the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island.

In New England, we remain: 1) the only state without a dedicated funding stream for housing production, 2) the state with the lowest per capita investment in housing, and 3) the state with the lowest rental vacancy rate at 3.1 percent. With an expanded affordable housing bond, we have the

Building homes and neighborhoods since 1975

439 Pine Street, Providence RI 02907
tel: (401) 272-0526 fax: (401) 272-5653 web: www.swapinc.org



opportunity as a State to respond to Rhode Island's COVID-19 recovery and to take meaningful action to increase the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes.

The development of affordable rental units could not be more pressing. Current data shows that one-third of Rhode Island renters are cost burdened, meaning that they are spending more than 30% of their income on rent. Across Providence, apartments costing less than \$1,200 are scarce. Yet to afford an apartment priced even at \$1,250 plus utilities and not be cost burdened, a family would have to earn over \$54,000, an amount is practically double the median income of households across the city excluding the East Side.

It could not be more evident than during this global pandemic that home is bedrock to a healthy society. **We strongly urge the Committee to support the proposed budget amendment to Article 5** and demonstrate that Rhode Island can and should be a place where all residents are able to live in safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities.

Thank you for your consideration and I welcome any questions that the committee may have and can be reached at 401-272-0526.

Respectfully submitted,

SWAP Inc.



Carla DeStefano
Executive Director

Building homes and neighborhoods since 1975

439 Pine Street, Providence RI 02907

tel: (401) 272-0526 fax: (401) 272-5653 web: www.swapinc.org

